



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

FA

5396

3

FINE ARTS LIBRARY



FL 4NX1 B

KARL BITTER

4-783dc-

FA 4783

HARVARD COLLEGE  
LIBRARY



THE BEQUEST OF  
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL  
(CLASS OF 1882)  
OF NEW YORK

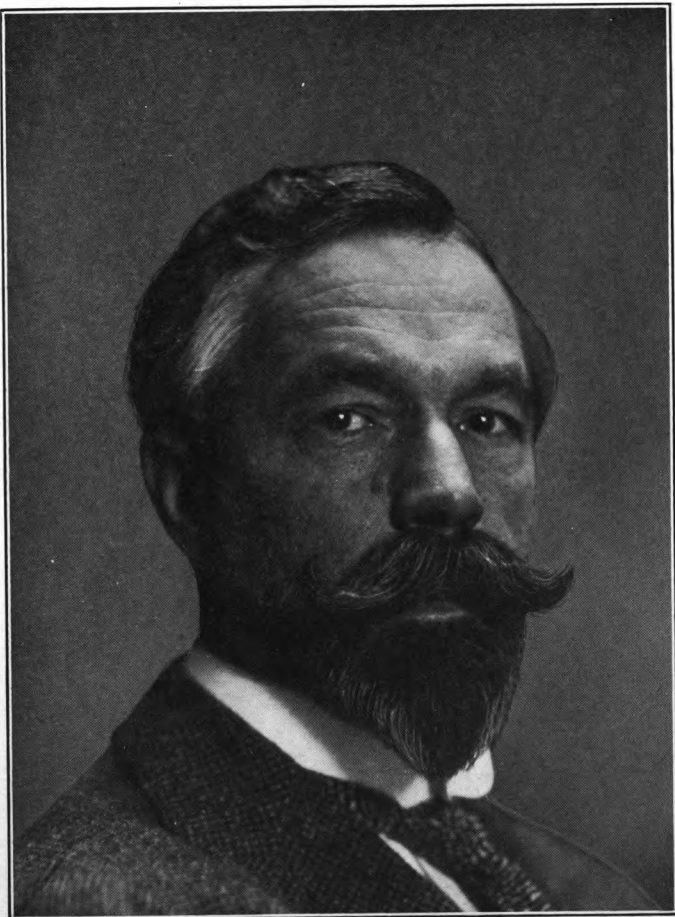
TRANSFERRED TO  
FINE ARTS LIBRARY

1918









0

**Proceedings at the Meeting**  
**In Memory**  
**of**  
**KARL BITTER**



**Held in the**  
**Ethical Culture Hall**  
**on**  
**Wednesday, May 5, 1915**

---

**Privately Printed**  
**At The Nation Press, Inc., New York**  
**1915**

FA 5396.3

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
FROM  
THE BEQUEST OF  
EVERT JANSEN WENDELL  
1918

**THE  
KARL BITTER MEMORIAL MEETING**

**May 5, 1915**

**under the auspices of**

**THE NATIONAL SCULPTURE SOCIETY**

**THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF DESIGN**

**THE ARCHITECTURAL LEAGUE OF NEW YORK**

**THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS**

**THE ART COMMISSION ASSOCIATES**

**THE CENTURY ASSOCIATION.**

**DR. FELIX ADLER presiding.**

**MR. HARRY ROWE SHELLEY at the organ.**

## DR. FELIX ADLER'S OPENING ADDRESS

We are inconsolable for the loss of Karl Bitter, and we have come here, honored representatives, of distinguished societies and of the general public, in order to give utterance to our grief as well as to pay our tribute to the artist and the man, to his singularly admirable qualities, his straightness in dealing, his rectitude, his sweetness of disposition, and that selflessness which distinguished him through life and culminated in his last action.

Several weeks have already elapsed since that cruel night that saw him destroyed in the crowded, glaring thoroughfare, and as yet there is no adequate reason to believe that his death will at least be the means of averting death from others. Even this very morning another sacrifice was added to the awful list. Singularly supine and torpid is our community. Renewed efforts will be needed to spur the public's conscience, and it is to be hoped that such efforts will spring from our meeting to-night. We cannot console ourselves with the belief that he was a vicarious sacrifice for others, but even if it were so, vicarious suffering is uplifting only when it occurs under a kind of compelling necessity; it is saddening and depressing when we must admit as in this case that it was due to heedlessness. And why should his precious life be lost to save others hereafter, perhaps less worthy than his own? Was his not too precious to be sacrificed? No, I cannot find comfort in the ordinary altruism. I find solace only in the contemplation of that in a man's life which does not go with his going, that which is not lost, in the things which remain, and to these to-night eminent justice will be done by fellow-artists and friends.

I wish in these brief remarks to touch only on a single thought. I wish to speak of the artist as a civilizer, as an agent in a progressive civilization, as a public teacher and benefactor. And I find that this noble function of the artist chiefly consists in one singular benefit which he confers, namely, that he introduces through art into the life of the people a principle of moderation and restraint. Art has many a joyous function. It is the office of the artist to create a thing that is marked out as a joy not for the moment but forever, a thing in the contemplation of which we incessantly and evermore renew our joy. Art delights, art refines, but art also

elevates and ennobles, and it does this by weaving the wide diversity of things sensual, things passionate, and things impulsive into a flowing unity, by subjugating and subjecting the wild crude things of life to the law of beauty, by introducing into things, and through them into the life of the people, the element of moderation and restraint. Now, it happens that when a civilization is young and as yet imperfect, the very things which it is the mission of art to restrain will sometimes escape control and override and submerge the best. And this is what happened in the case of Karl Bitter. Schiller, in "Die Piccolomini," in a telling passage, relates the death of Max Piccolomini, a brilliant cavalry officer. He describes him, how he heads the squadron, leads the charge, and how suddenly he is thrown from his horse and trampled into the dust by the rout which follows in his rear, and which, incapable of being checked, sweeps on and over him. And he concludes the passage with the pathetic words:

"Zertreten unterm Hufschlag seiner Pferde—  
Das ist das Loos des Schönen auf der Erde,"

or

"Crushed by his horses' hoofs, 'spite all his worth—  
Such is the fate of beauty on this earth."

Schiller paints the sweeping cavalry charge as an example of the blind, rude forces in nature, in man and things, and Piccolomini, crushed by his horses, is the type of the priceless, precious thing, trampled by the rude forces as yet unrestrained.

For us the automobile is an equally fit and a better example of the rude, crude thing which it is the mission of art to moderate and restrain, which the art and artists of our community have not yet succeeded in subjugating. We find solace in the thought that the American people are intrinsically susceptible to these finer influences, that Karl Bitter was but one of a vanguard to be followed by a long line of American artists, whom with prophetic eye we see arising in the future and through whom we may hope, therefore, that the work of Mr. Bitter, not lost, will be resumed and fulfilled in the work of his successors.

DR. FELIX ADLER: I shall now call upon Mr. Robert Underwood Johnson to read a poem in memory of Karl Bitter.

MR. ROBERT UNDERWOOD JOHNSON read as follows:

### KARL BITTER.

O multitude of the untimely dead,  
Who somewhere find and seal the endless thread  
Of life, that to *our* eyes must broken be—  
Ye who now labor with no Death to dread:

Take to your happy ranks this new access  
Of flaming spirit, this pure guilelessness,  
This noble fancy, this brave loyalty  
That cherished Beauty more, not Honor less;—

Him whose divining skill had power to save  
Too few alas! of all our wise and brave  
In bronze so true that what to-day he took  
From Life, to-morrow he to History gave;—

Him in the warmth of whose inspiring word  
Youth was to memorable ardor stirred.  
And found so clear a path that, though the guide  
No more was seen, the pilgrims never erred;—

In whom such frank simplicity did dwell  
To know him little was to know him well,  
Till even the passer-by shall long recall  
The cheerful music of a silent bell.

Masters of Art and servitors of Song,  
Who somewhere your recessionary prolong,  
Forgive us if too much we mourn the man  
So welcome now in your beloved throng.

As ye are happy at his coming, we  
May not dissolve in grief his memory,  
But keep his faith in Beauty as our own,  
With grateful joy that such a soul should be.

DR. FELIX ADLER: We shall now hear from Mr. Herbert Adams, speaking for the National Sculpture Society.

MR. HERBERT ADAMS addressed the meeting as follows:

### A SCULPTOR'S TRIBUTE

The sculptors of America have suffered the loss of a leader and an inspiring genius. Karl Bitter, a natural commander among men, clear of vision, a thinker, an artist, and above all, an inspiration to his fellow-sculptors, had already accomplished a great life-work, yet was still developing freely and vigorously, still arriving at higher and higher ranges of expression in his art. Had he been spared to reach the full maturity of his powers, what accomplishment would have been his! Each succeeding year saw him a stronger, nobler man, and a greater artist.

To have lived a life of such constant growth, of such rich experience and of such splendid achievement falls to the lot of but few men. At an exhibition of the Architectural League in the early nineties my attention was attracted by a bust of a youth. I was struck by the swift, sure touch shown in this work, by the faultless construction, the characterization, the style. Then for the first time, I saw the name of Karl Bitter. A period elapsed before we really knew each other, but meanwhile I always looked for his work, and marveled at his skill. Later it was my privilege to know the man, and now for many years he has been to me a friend and a counselor, one whom I constantly valued more and more.

Through all these years, the development of the man and the artist has gone hand in hand. In his work he was always the student, always the seeker; always looking for a better point of view, or a better method of work. But no matter what his point of view or what his method of work, his art always bore the unmistakable seal of his own personality, an art and a personality which were those of Karl Bitter, and of no other being.

We of his profession marvel not only at the volume of the work he accomplished, but at the wide range of his powers. He seemed equally at home in portraying the character of a great man and in arranging the decorative ensemble of the façade of a building; as skilled in designing an equestrian statue as in modeling the human figure. We admire the

clean-cut, stately equestrian of General Sigel, the subtle character, so truly drawn, in the Jefferson statue, the fountains, sparkling and bubbling with the very spirit of youth; the masterly composition of his great architectural groups. He has enriched our country's art life, and his work will endure.

Important as was the personal performance of Karl Bitter as a sculptor, no less significant was his influence upon the members of his profession. By his enthusiasm and his suggestion he has inspired other sculptors to some of their highest achievements. And he was not only the artist, gifted with the power to urge and inspire his brother artists; he was a leader, endowed with rare executive ability—a faculty whereby he so successfully directed the sculptural decorations of the Buffalo Exposition, that since then, every great International Exposition in our country has regarded his services as indispensable. Nor is this all. The public spirit with which he devoted his time and talent to our city as a member of its Art Commission, and the counsel and help he has freely given to men of his own profession stamp him as one whose untimely death brings unusual loss to our community.

Karl Bitter was one of the charter members of the National Sculpture Society, and has ever been tireless in upholding its best traditions, and in seeking its best paths of progress. The estimation in which he was held by his fellow-sculptors I cannot better express than by reading, if I may, the resolutions passed by the National Sculpture Society, of which, at the time of his death, he was President:

NATIONAL SCULPTURE SOCIETY RESOLUTION  
IN MEMORY OF KARL BITTER, PRESIDENT

*Adopted April 13, 1915*

*Whereas*, In consequence of a tragic accident on the evening of April 9, 1915, sudden death has closed the career of Karl Bitter, honored President of our Society, a sculptor of distinguished genius, in the prime of his life's achievement; and

*Whereas*, Karl Bitter was long an ardent worker for the highest ideals of this Society, and was thrice chosen as its President; and

*Whereas*, In circles far wider than those of his profession, he was not only valued as a faithful friend,

but, because of his commanding personality, his intellectual and moral force, his enthusiasm, his imagination, his executive ability and his devotion to the service of art, he was repeatedly appointed to positions of great trust; now therefore be it

*Resolved:* That we, as members of the National Sculpture Society, here record our loyal affection for Karl Bitter, comrade and President; our recognition of his liberating and quickening spirit among us; our gratitude for the beauty his art gave to the world; even in the midst of our profound sorrow writing down these things in our annals, for love, honor and remembrance; and be it further

*Resolved:* That we send to the bereaved family of Karl Bitter this our sincere and respectful expression of sympathy for their loss—a sympathy which cannot be measured by the halting words we here write or say, but which wells up overflowing from the depths of our hearts.

DR. FELIX ADLER: Before introducing the next speaker, I will read the following telegram:

Indianapolis, May 4, 1915.

Dr. Felix Adler:

We ask through you permission to present at the meeting to-morrow this meager expression of our profound respect and affectionate regard for Karl Bitter.

Our acquaintance began with his acceptance from us of a commission for two memorial tablets. We were actuated solely by a desire to obtain work of the highest artistic merit and our search for an artist led unmistakably to him. It was happily so, for Indianapolis is now enriched by two exquisite works of art, the product of Karl Bitter's rare fancy and delicate touch.

During his frequent visits here many of us came under the spell of his engaging personality, and there was revealed to us a spirit of rare beauty. We mourn with you and wish to share in honoring a great man.

ART ASSOCIATION OF INDIANAPOLIS,

By Evans Woolen, *President.*



DR. FELIX ADLER: We shall now be glad to hear from Mr. John G. Milburn, who will tell you of the work of Karl Bitter in connection with the Pan-American Exposition.

### MR. MILBURN'S ADDRESS

MR. JOHN G. MILBURN spoke as follows:

You will not expect from me an estimate of Karl Bitter as an artist. In the domain of Art my lack of qualifications entitles me to be dumb. But of Karl Bitter as a man I can speak with some authority, because of my contact with him for fully two years when he was under grave and trying responsibilities.

I hope many of you saw and remember the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo, fourteen years ago. Those of us who were connected with it in an executive capacity will never forget the problems it presented from the time of its inception. What most interested us was the plan of, what I may call, the physical structure of the exposition. It would not do to assemble, as it were, fortuitously, a mass of buildings in a picturesque setting of grounds. It was felt that the whole and its parts should work out and express a fundamental purpose or idea. That was the enigma submitted to the Board of Architects, of which the late John M. Carrère was Chairman, to Karl Bitter, the Director of Sculpture, and to Charles W. Turner, the Director of Color, and the result was the very beautiful, meaningful and harmonious exposition they produced.

Bitter came to us as Director of Sculpture through the nomination of the National Sculpture Society. His nomination was justified immediately. He commanded our entire confidence at once. His exuberant energy, his enthusiasm, his earnestness, his breadth of mind, his love of his art, stamped him as the man for the place. The Board of Architects with him and the other associates, went, as it were, into retreat and evolved the fundamental idea of the plan for the exposition. I would like to explain it but there is not the time, and it is not necessary, so a few words of obvious generality must suffice.

The object was to make visible to the inquiring eye American resources, civilization, enlightenment and progress. The outer range of buildings was devoted to natural resources, such as forestry, mining, agriculture and horticulture. Towards the center were the Temple of Music and other buildings, the con-

tents of which were to illustrate Government and Education. Beyond them were the buildings for the exhibition of material progress in Manufacturing and the Liberal Arts, Machinery, Transportation and Electricity. In the center was the Court of Fountains, culminating in the scene which suggested the great waters of our country, and a massive tower, with seemed to be extending its protecting arms around all that had been done and achieved for mankind by the Americans.

With an inspiration that captured the Board of Architects, Bitter conceived and developed a scheme of sculpture, beginning at the entrance and ending at the tower, which unfolded and illustrated the plan, purposes and objects of the exposition, not as a miscellaneous mass of buildings and exhibits, but as an inherent revelation of the development and various forms of energy and activity of the western hemisphere. That it should be merely ornamental did not satisfy him. Hence his scheme was a progressive composition; first, Nature; then, Man; and then the Genius of Man. Nature was expressed by fountains and groups entitled Mineral, Wealth, Animal Wealth, and Floral Wealth. The Fountain of Nature was balanced by such subjects as the Savage Age, and the Age of Despotism, and the Age of Enlightenment. In the division showing the Genius of Man, there were groups representing the human emotions and the human intellect; the Birth of Venus, typifying the emotions, and the Birth of Athene, typifying the intellect.

Science, Agriculture and Manufacture were pendants on the Fountain of Pendants in the center, and the great tower was surmounted by the Goddess of Light. The main approach to the exposition, called the Triumphal Causeway, was symbolical of the national spirit. The groups in the niches represented Courage, Patriotism, Truth and Benevolence; the fountains between which one paused symbolized the Atlantic and the Pacific; and the mounted standard bearers crowning the four pylons of the causeway were, with their accessories, designed to express Power and Peace. These were the work of Bitter himself, and were, in the opinion of Saint-Gaudens, the finished product of the sculptor's art at the exposition. By competent judges they were regarded as the greatest of Bitter's genius; and it will always be a matter of profound regret that, executed only in plaster, there is no enduring record of them. There was something about those superb youths mounted on

their fiery, rearing steeds, so full of life, energy, and power, that seemed to suggest the resolute manliness, high courage and indomitable spirit of Bitter himself.

All this was a great undertaking, and it occupied the best part of two years of his life. Upon him developed the selection of his collaborators, a duty which he discharged with infinite tact, absolute fairness, and a thorough knowledge and appreciation of the men selected. Then there was the supervision of the work as it proceeded, and the superintendence of the enlargement of the models and the placing of the finished works in position. When we remember that there were more than five hundred of these productions, the magnitude of this task is apparent. Moreover, it had all to be done on time, and, if the individual artist is inclined to be careless of the passage of weeks and months, what must have been the worries over the responsibility for an army of them. But he was more than equal to the duties of his difficult position. It was not only that he displayed extraordinary executive ability, but that he never failed in that delicacy, consideration, gentleness, firmness and personal sympathy which were necessary to perfect co-operation between him and his comrades. There were no jealousies amongst them, no bickerings, no sulkings, no intrigues. He imbued them with his own spirit and that great, big, hearty, powerful, strong man evoked only enthusiasm and devotion. The excellence of the work at the exposition is a fond tribute to his rare and great qualities.

I cannot refrain from telling an incident of the man in the midst of his work. He was walking through the model shop one Sunday and saw a group of three children, the work of an artist whose inspiration for the time being had evidently failed. They were dull, plain, commonplace types. Bitter stopped, hesitated, and all at once took off his coat, rolled up his sleeves, went to work and never stopped until there were before him three pretty, smiling, delightful children. He passed on, leaving, as it were, that touch of his own nature. We can easily imagine the thoughts and feelings of the weary artist and the impulse he got when he returned to his handiwork and saw the change.

I wish I had words to convey to you our admiration and respect for him. We soon knew that we had a man of genius with us, and a man of high practical qualities; that he could be absolutely depended upon always to carry on the work that was in his charge. His devotion and loyalty never faltered.

No emergency daunted him; no amount of labor staggered him. His zeal and energy and courage never fluctuated, and he was a tower of strength to us from the beginning to the end.

Of the personal relation, I can only speak with the warmest feelings. What need I say more—what could I say more than that it became with many of us a real and lasting friendship? Bitter lived his life on a high plane and the world was to him a very serious place, almost to the degree of austerity. But with those qualities there was such a sweetness of nature and courtesy and broad-mindedness, that intercourse with him was as delightful as it was elevating. It is only a few weeks ago that I saw him, and I remember how deeply impressed I was by his strength and vigor, which seemed to have been mellowed and broadened and enriched by the passing ten or twelve years. It is harrowing to realize that in a moment he is struck down in the prime of his life by the same strange fate that deprived us of Carrère in the fulness of *his* powers, the two men to whom the Buffalo Exposition was most indebted for its beauty and its charm.

DR. FELIX ADLER: I wish to read a letter from Mr. Daniel C. French, addressed to Mr. Villard:

Dear Mr. Villard:

Your letter of April 17th, notifying me of the Memorial Meeting to Mr. Bitter on the 5th of May, has followed me here. I regret extremely that I cannot return home in time to pay my tribute of affection and admiration and respect for the dear man whose death we mourn so deeply. His loss to the fraternity of sculptors is inestimable; to his friends it is beyond words.

Most truly yours,

DANIEL C. FRENCH.

I will also read this Resolution by the American Institute of Architects:

RESOLUTION OF THE NEW YORK CHAPTER OF  
THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF  
ARCHITECTS.

*Whereas*, The art of the sculptor has lost by death the faithful service of Karl Theodore Francis Bitter, whose devotion and genius steadily uplifted the ideals not only of those of his profession, but of all who practice and follow the Fine Arts; and

*Whereas*, His splendid talents, attainments, and capacity for friendship enlarged the scope of his legion of friends, and all with whom he had association; be it

*Resolved*, That the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects records its admiration of his life and ideals, its gratitude for his valuable contributions to the art of sculpture, and its love and honor for his memory.

DR. FELIX ADLER: It would not be proper if on this occasion the City itself should not speak on behalf of the man, and we are fortunate in having a representative for the City admirably fit to speak for Mr. Bitter, in the President of the Board of Aldermen, the Honorable George McAneny.

MR. McANENY'S ADDRESS

MR. GEORGE McANENY spoke as follows:

Ladies and Gentlemen: The word that I will leave with you to-night will be brief. I cannot attempt to repeat or even to follow the men who have already spoken. It is peculiar to all of us that in whatever way we speak, we speak as warm and near friends of Karl Bitter, and what they have said is already moving my heart as it has moved yours. But that mere formal word for the City I bring with all of the authority that the standing of Karl Bitter in this community and the grief the people feel at his loss, can give me. It lay not merely in that he built about our town these wonderful monuments that bespeak his genius; not only that he held high examples that are bound to stimulate the production of other things as wonderful in years to come, but the way that he served the city from day to day, in what may be termed the routine of its own attention to those matters. The clearest thing in my

own mind, as I recall Karl Bitter, is how, as a member of the Art Commission, he was full of enthusiasm for that work, devoted in the time that he gave, devoted in the minute attention that he gave to everything that passed before him as one of these judges in art. Only a few days—a week or two—before he died, he had written me a letter, written on behalf of the National Sculpture Society, but with all the spirit of the member of the Art Commission in it, and left with me a suggestion that I trust will be accepted and woven into reality before much time has passed. May I read a paragraph or two from that letter? It really represents that finest of understanding of the relation of art to the city and to sculpture in particular, that had marked the later years of his life. He wrote:

“On various occasions it has been felt that the city should give definite attention and study to its policy of granting sites or of making provisions for public memorials, fountains, and other subjects of similar character. We have at the present time no such policy or plan to guide the city authorities in these matters. Whenever a group of citizens, or the city itself, proposes to erect a memorial, the case is taken up by the department into whose province that particular object happens to fall, and it is further passed upon by the Art Commission. In a manner it receives much thought and attention, but the fact that there are constant changes in the personnel of these bodies makes a continued policy difficult. The lack of such guiding principle has been noticed, but so far the proposal of remedies has been confined to discussions within professional circles.

“The problem upon which I am touching is too big and comprehensive to be crystallized and sufficiently developed when an individual case is submitted to the City Department. The Commissioner of Parks, Mr. Cabot Ward, realizing the defects of the present system, has approached the officers of this Society with the object of obtaining advice as to the best manner in which a better policy could be inaugurated. Mr. Ward feels, quite justly, that the interests of the city are poorly served when, under the temporary pressure of some powerful faction of the citizenship, an important site is granted to some unimportant memorial. He realizes the difficulty of opposing such a movement when no stronger argument can be advanced against it than the opinion of a city department, even if supported by the judgment of the Art Commission. More convincing and satisfactory would be the affirmative or negative ruling if it were given on the basis of a plan which

would correspond in thoroughness and authoritative substance with the plans and policies on which your architectural committees are now engaged. It would be possible to demonstrate, on the basis of such a guiding plan, that the city must reserve certain of its most prominent squares and places for subjects which only the future can bring to ripe maturity. It would also suggest, and quite properly so, what general forms the memorials or fountains should take to give greater harmony and a better presentation of public achievements than our city parks and squares and other open places now present."

Mr. Bitter thus offered a suggestion upon which the City must act and, in my judgment, it would be but a fitting thing that this be done soon, because he has suggested it and because it is wise. But so his thought always ran upon those things which would tend to make the City more beautiful and more serviceable than it is. His were no fanciful theories, they were always practical, always full of sound sense. And many a day has he come into my own office, as no doubt into the offices of other members of the City Government, with some thought or some suggestion upon which we have been able to act. Those are things which do not go into the public record as his own accomplishment of them. Surely, they belong there.

I suppose that I may tell you that I speak for all the people of the City of New York, in recognizing the great debt of gratitude that we owe to Karl Bitter, that I may speak as a member of the City Government for all the people in expressing the grief that fills all our hearts. His name was known wherever art was known. His name was known in every public and active circle. The tragic manner of his death carried his name into every household. It is an occasion for civic mourning, and it is that mourning that we meet to express to-night.

Now, of Karl Bitter, the man, just a word or two of my own knowledge of him. I recall one or two incidents when it was my good fortune to work with him in the development of some plan, which demonstrate just what his manhood and his art meant. I remember his earnestness, his great patience with the suggestions of everyone who came to view or criticise his work, never putting aside anything so suggested, but taking it as worth while, even if not weaving it into the final expression of the work itself. Particularly so was it with his Carl Schurz. The pains, the infinite pains, that he took with that work and his feeling from the beginning that here was an opportunity to preserve every trace—to give the form and features of the man

who meant so much to those who had, as Bitter had, come across the seas, and found their opportunity in America—found here their great opportunity for leadership and statesmanship.

Karl Bitter himself was a statesman. There was nothing in our public life that he did not quickly grasp, conceive and understand. When he worked out for us the medallion for Robert Ogden, commemorating our journeys and experiences in the South, we told Bitter what we wanted to express. He came back soon with a wonderful design, expressing every thought in our minds and giving to the world of art a real treasure. It was so in everything that he touched. Never have I known a man in whom the rarest qualities of strength and sweetness were so wonderfully united. I have never known him to be impatient; never known him to leave a word that would rankle in the heart of any other man—only that constant fineness. New York will treasure his name, I need not assure you. New York will wish to have his boys in its citizenship and they will be welcome, not merely for what they do, but as sons of Karl Bitter. In short, the name of Karl Bitter will always be blazoned in beautiful letters. The City itself will never forget him.

**DR. FELIX ADLER:** The last word on this occasion belongs to a close personal friend of Mr. Bitter, Mr. Oswald G. Villard, whose special topic will be:

### **“KARL BITTER, THE MAN AND THE DEMOCRAT”**

**MR. OSWALD GARRISON VILLARD** made these remarks:

Let us turn to the best known and least known of books; to stories of a thousand days, a thousand nights, in garden and in courtyard, in every clime, under any sun, under every moon. Nowhere, nowhere do we find a tale more stirring or more touching than ours to-night. The theme is old; in ages past genie and fairy adorned it; magic lamps illuminated it; wizards' wands waved o'er it, yes, the spirit of stark tragedy has o'erhung it, and the wings of angels have fluttered through it long, long ere this. The wicked old king, his cruel servant, the handsome gifted youth, incomparable in stature and in form, who breaks intolerable bonds and crosses the seas to distant lands, there to win fame and prosperity—this is the groundwork of our story. Of just such material the minnesinger spun the slight web of his fiction in the very dawn of literature and the story teller of the bazaars during long ages conjured the pence out of the pockets of his squatting hearers. Yet surely never

were their versions so fair and so unsullied, so compelling, so full of inspiration as ours.

Let us recall it as it was. Karl Bitter inhaled freedom of spirit with adolescence. He was early of those who stand in the market-place and stir their comrades to thought—out of full, generous hearts. He spoke from a soul born for beauty, radiant with ideals that demanded permanent expression and would not be denied—until an unnatural law of the military interfered with the law of his nature. Soon thereafter, out of the East, he stood before the imperial city of the West. Great walls it had and high; how could he scale them without name or friends or speech or means? Behold, it needed but the trump of his genius to lay them low. A short year and a half and his fame had spread among all who like himself were devoted to the cult of the beautiful. His genius, transplanted, took root like some wild plant at the edge of a swamp and grew straight up toward heaven, never ceasing to flower with greater and greater charm.

Day by day the spirit within him broadened and deepened. The very atmosphere of America was tonic to his nature. No bonds here to constrain, no castes to fetter, no hidebound traditions in art or life to enslave, no king to bow before. This was home to him. Here was an Austrian born to be an American; in him every string was attuned to democracy; every note responded to our Republican overtones; the more he tested American liberty the freer and freer he grew. Indeed, coming from abroad with fresh eyes that looked beneath the surface he saw and felt things that were veiled to the multitude born to Americanism—precisely as did in other fields Jacob Riis and Carl Schurz before him. So it soon came to pass that Americans turned to him, this foreigner, this “Dutchman” of the East Side workshops, to interpret their Americanism, yes, even to celebrate in plastic art the triumph of an American fleet in Asiatic waters.

But far greater than that victory of our arms is the magnificent triumph of democracy, which Bitter's whole career symbolizes. He was the clearest living proof of the wonder of its ways. One can speak evil of America if one will, and sneer at the melting-pot, too. One can scoff at the multitudes of immigrants who appear to the unthinking but uncouth burdens, great masses that stand wonder-eyed within the portals of the land of liberty and know not which way to turn; that crave leadership yet fear to trust; and ever and anon have concealed among them some precious jewel like this, some divine human

gift as their recompense to the haven of refuge that bade them come and be welcome, rest and be free. So to Karl Bitter swung wide the gates, and he who is just must bow down and respect the nation that laid its spell upon this man, that raised him up from the struggling, unloosed his artist powers, bade him work, filled his heart with love for its aims, and inspired him in the twinkling of an eye with the very spirit and the majesty of its institutions.

The charm of his personality, the rugged force within him, the skill of his tools carried him through one after another of the open doors of opportunity, and as he passed each door, it was ever clearer that America had made this man its own. How abundantly he repaid this confidence and trust, how warmly he appreciated the generosity of his welcome, his work attests a hundredfold. He recognized the obligations as well as the privileges of citizenship; therefore, the opportunity for public service never passed him by unheeded. For if his art was a jealous mistress, so was his new country, which he came to adore without forgetting the love for the old. The immensity of its spaces, the vastness of its problems, the staggering importance to humanity of their proper solution—these ever impressed themselves upon his mind.

It was not altogether by accident that he perched upon his enchanted Weehawken cliffs, nor was it only the beauty of the river and the vitality of its ever restless traffic, or the grandeur of the sky line in the evening light that lured him back there at the end of his life to work in the open, so that when his glance rested from the figure before him, it fell upon one of the wonders of the world. Yet the visions upon which he gazed were not always those he saw, for his was the inward-looking eye so often to be noticed in those whom fate has marked as its own. Beyond the city he saw the country, beyond the country mankind. So more and more it seemed as if his work turned to the interpretation of American life as it appeared to his enthusiasm and loyalty, reinforced by his deep reading in American history, and the writings of the Fathers. His Jefferson, Marshall and Hamilton, the Louisiana Purchase group, his Franz Sigel and Carl Schurz—only an historian could tell just how much of America's past is herein expressed, but no one can fail to read in them his sincerity, the earnestness of his purpose, the idealism that ruled his gifted chisel and the knowledge it bespeaks.

What wonder that his fellow-sculptors should three times have chosen him their national president? What wonder that

three great American expositions should have made this Austrian chief of the sculpture that was to interpret American progress to their hundreds of thousands of visitors or that the most characteristically American of our universities should have made him the portrayer of the rise of the Middle West and of its noble, democratic aspirations? Or that his genius should lightly have touched upon the negro problem and yet have illumined it in passing? Or that for him, the lover of his fellow men, his finest monument of war stood not for the warrior ready for the fray, but for the war-worn citizen soldiers returning, burdened with wounded and with great gaps in their ranks, to their waiting pathetic women and children, eager to turn again to the paths of peace, to the upbuilding of the beloved republic.

Surely the heavy hand of Destiny was early laid upon him. What seemed an irretrievable boyish misfortune proved the making of the man; his cruel military persecutor became his benefactor; his exile but a translation to unbounded opportunity and to lasting happiness. Then as if it were foreordained that the thread of life should soon be severed, Providence crowded much into this existence. Karl Bitter had drunk deeply from the cup of success; the plaudits of the multitude had long rung in his ears; the praise of the elect had spurred him on in fullest measure, without the power, however, to make so earnest and devoted a nature vain or proud. The admiration of his fellow craftsmen, their generous bestowal of rewards were freely his and so was the joy of serving his fellows, while unconsciously moulding rare monuments to his soul in portraying the lineaments of others. He knew what it was to be a leader of men; his was the stimulating consciousness of having won by sheer merit, without favor or fawning, a place among the foremost of his time. To how very few is as much vouchsafed; how few even at three-score and ten have carved as much out of the quarry of life? And always and always the true artist was wholly subordinated to his work. His was to give, never to obtain; his genius was not for self-glorification but for the generations to come. Why weep for him? In all his life there was no single thing to depress or to pity, but everything to elate! He quickened our faith in our art, in our life, in our nation.

How fast our little bark slips down the river of life! Surely it was but yesterday he took his seat, so calm, so kind, so brave. How strong the paddle, how vigorous the arm, how keen the sight, how straight he went! See, others are in the rapids, some upon the rocks, *This* pilot knew the way, the truest course, for he took it from the stars.

## ADDRESS AT THE FUNERAL OF KARL BITTER

April 13, 1915.

By DR. JOHN LOVEJOY ELLIOTT.

This home now, as always, is the home of beauty. It cannot be that the thought of death can long have here an abode. The strong spirit of Karl Bitter never more dominated the thoughts and hearts of those who knew and loved him than he does at this moment. We are not here to say a sad farewell. This time and place are sacred. The ceremony which we now perform is sacred, but it is not because of the thought of parting. A funeral service is a time of reunion. Oh! how strong in death are they whose loves are good. When there is no longer the sound of the voice, the touch of the hand, yet do they live—live in that spirit which they have created. Karl Bitter was a revealer. He revealed not only to the eyes but to the spirits of men the great things. And it is on the plane of these great things, it is in that life which he lived, that he still lives, and upon which those who loved him can still live with him. Not by drawing closer to this flower-laden casket can we find him, but in the spirit of his life and work—in his influence that is so strong upon you, there he is.

This is a solemn and holy time of reunion. We all stand as little children before this great mystery. And a child's story has been running through my mind—the story told in the home from which he came and which he himself may have heard when he was a boy. It is the legend that on Christmas Eve a little child was wandering through the streets of a great city. He walked among the homes of the great and powerful. Through the windows there came a light. He looked in at these windows and there he saw the busy people preparing feasts and the Christmas trees. He tapped on the window, but with threatening looks and hard words they bade him begone. He wandered from house to house, but no one admitted him and finally he came to a humble dwelling, and there was a mother and children hard at their work. He rapped at this window and they welcomed him and put him by the fire and gave him food, and then they went about their own tasks. But soon those within that humble dwelling found that there was shining in their rooms a light. They knew not from whence it came, but the light grew stronger and brighter, and when they looked at the child they saw that it came from his eyes and face and the hair that was matted was shining as with a halo, and then they knew it was in truth the Christmas child of the legends.

The light grew brighter and the walls and roof of their little dwelling disappeared, and through that light they saw the city and the great world about them, and the child faded into the light which it had brought, until it was only a star, but those into whose eyes the light had shone had forever a strange power. They could see the good and beautiful that others could not see. It was the gift of the child to them. Wherever they went they saw smiling faces and wonders in the landscape and the city and the world. Karl Bitter was such a child. He had tapped at the windows of the homes among which he was born and at the places where the soldiers met, but while they saw him they did not recognize his spirit nor take him in. Therefore he came to America, this land dedicated to freedom, and here he found a home. At first he was not recognized, but soon a new light began to shine where he was, and in that light men beheld new meanings and new splendors, and the light continued to shine and will continue forever. He has left within the eyes of his countrymen new power to see. To a free land he held up a new image of liberty.

This week one of his statues will be unveiled as they have so often been, and when the veil is withdrawn from the face of the statue men look upon its beauty, but that statue itself unveils to them far more than can meet the eyes. It unveils the meaning of human life. The meaning of beauty itself he makes more clear. Karl Bitter has been of priceless service to this land. He has given face and form to the memories of great men, and in their form he has given immortality to their spirit. More and more the light grows. More and more men see what he saw. Here in this land of the commercial spirit he lived and developed its better nature, revealed ever new heights of freedom to those who would be free. The city and the nation gave him a home and he gave greater worth and beauty to the nation. He was ever true to the spirit which he saw, and even in the earlier days of hardship never for bread would he betray his art.

He stood among the great and powerful as an equal and he made those who were poor and weak feel that they were his equal. He understood the great and he understood the humble. He put the bread of life into the mouths of those who had no claim upon him. He had much of what was best in Christianity. His very enemies came to him and he held out his hand and helped them.

It is one of the marks of great, strong men who are of the finest mould that they love children, and Karl Bitter has given

to us all a new understanding and a new love of these young souls. Nothing I can think of could be more beautiful, more touching, than this little child kneeling among the flowers that rest upon the casket. It is more eloquent of beauty and of grief than any words could be—more beautiful, I think, even than music.

Surely we too standing here can know the meaning of the words describing those who are most blessed.

“Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God.”

There is one more legend of which I would speak. The legend of that young man to whom these words are attributed. The legend is that after he died those who were nearest to him saw him again, saw him transfigured with the wounds still upon his hands and side, but shining with a wonderful new light, saw him as he really was and not as he had been, saw him with the power upon him which was really his.

The friends and those who loved Karl Bitter are here, and the one great desire in the hearts of all is to do something for his name, for his memory—in some way to honor his worth. What can we do? These flowers to-morrow will fade; the poor word dies as soon as it is spoken. There is, however, one great thing that we can do, and that is, to appreciate him, to see him as he really was, to see him transfigured, see him as he wanted to be. No one in this life is able to do the work just as he wants to do it. No one is able to express himself with all the power for which he yearns, and no one can ask more of his friends than to think of him, not alone as he was but as he wanted to be. Let us see our loved ones transfigured; think of them as having the power of their desires, the power to bring into the world the good for which they yearned. Then shall we have the power to appreciate those whom we have known and loved.

May the memory of Karl Bitter be a blessing to his wife and children; a support to them in the years that are to come. May the light that he shed be to the people of this land as a fixed star in the darkness. We know that it will be so for it has been written, “The memory of a good man is a blessing forever and forever more.”



oof 4/27/17



**FA5396.3**

Proceedings at the meeting in memor  
Fine Arts Library AXN4050



3 2044 033 758 574



